

Intergenerational living in Haren

Exploring the Perceptions of Older Adults on Intergenerational
Living in Haren

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Abstract

This paper researches the perception on the potential of intergenerational living in Haren by interviewing older adults (67+) who are ageing in place. In the Netherlands, the ageing population is encouraged to age in place and limited alternative living options for older adults are available. However, ageing in place can be associated with disadvantages such as loneliness and isolation. Consequently, residential systems for older populations are reevaluated. This study aims to determine whether intergenerational living could be a solution to mitigate these disadvantages and raises the question: "How do older adults who age in place perceive the potential of intergenerational living in Haren?".

Intergenerational living can be defined as a group of people from different generations living together. The objective of this study is to contribute to a general narrative about intergenerational living, thereby aiding in the discussion of alternative housing options for the ageing population in The Netherlands. This qualitative research analyses ten conducted semi-structured, qualitative in-depth interviews. The results indicate a potential of intergenerational living in Haren, recognizing the importance of compatibility of co-residents, and provides insight into older adults' perceptions. Further quantitative research could establish patterns to determine how many people are interested in intergenerational living and the significance of their motives.

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Introduction

Background

The global population is rapidly ageing due to the baby boomer generation growing older and advancements in medical technology (Seo et al., 2023). Research by CBS indicates that the Dutch population will reach its peak proportion of older adults by 2040, with over a quarter of the population being 65 or older (CBS, 2023). To adequately care for older adults in 2040, it is projected that one in four employees would need to work in healthcare, and up to 21 percent of the national income would need to be allocated on healthcare (Rijksoverheid, 2021).

This trend is also apparent in the Province of Groningen. Despite an anticipated decline in the overall population from 2018 to 2040, statistical projections indicate a increase in residents aged 80 and above, from 27 thousand to 54 thousand (Sociaal Planbureau Groningen, 2023). Notably, among the ten municipalities constituting Groningen, Haren contains the highest proportion of older adults, evidenced by data indicating that in 2023, 27% of the residents were aged 65 and above (CBS, 2023).

Demographic ageing affects how society manages the ageing process and the environment for older adults (Seo et al., 2023). In 2018, the Dutch Ministry of Health, Wellbeing and Sports introduced the program 'Langer Thuis', aiming to enable older adults to 'age in place' and encouraging them to stay independent in their current environment (Tweede Kamer, 2018). This is considered a widely cost-effective solution as it reduces the demand for residential care in nursing homes and mitigates the expected increase in welfare state expenditures (Vanleerberghe et al., 2017). By living in their own homes, older adults can maintain their independence longer, improving their quality of life. However, ageing in place can sometimes lead to disadvantages such as loneliness and social isolation, which can negatively affect the quality of life (Groot, 2013). Western societies are therefore reevaluating residential systems for older adults, acknowledging this as a contemporary challenge (Stavenuiter & Dongen, 2008).

In policy and research on ageing in place, the emphasis frequently lies on enabling older adults to remain in their own homes. However, research by Wiles et al. (2012) suggests that the significance of ageing in place for older adults extends beyond the physical home and includes a sense of attachment and community connection. This indicates that older adults can age in place by remaining within the same community, even if this necessitates moving houses within that community. Furthermore, older adults prefer housing types familiar to their neighbourhood, underscoring the need for suitable housing options in response to demographic changes (Abramsson & Andersson, 2015).

Currently, many older adults reside in family homes that are often too large for their needs. In Groningen, 73% of older adults occupy homes that require adaptations to facilitate ageing in place. Moreover, the development of alternative living arrangements for older adults could help relieve the structural tensions in the Dutch housing market (Smid et al., 2022). As a result, intergenerational living within the same community presents as a potential remedy to mitigating the disadvantages associated with ageing in place, presenting

itself as a suitable alternative housing option for older adults (Dop & Hofstra, 2014). Despite its potential benefits, intergenerational living remains relatively uncommon in the Netherlands, with notable examples limited to certain citizen-led initiatives (Krul, 2015).

Research Problem

Considering the disadvantages of ageing in place, it is relevant to evaluate various ways of living. This study aims to determine whether intergenerational living could be perceived as a suitable alternative way of ageing in place. To date, little is written on intergenerational living in the Netherlands. However, the municipality of Haren, with over a quarter of its population comprising older adults, stands to benefit from adopting intergenerational housing solutions.

This qualitative research addresses a gap in the literature by exploring older adults' perceptions of the potential of intergenerational housing, as no previous research has been found. Therefore, this research can contribute to the broader discourse on intergenerational living and aid in the discussion on housing for the ageing population in the Netherlands. This context leads to the central research question: *“How do older adults who age in place perceive the potential of intergenerational living in Haren?”*

To answer this question, sub-questions have been formulated:

1. *What are the advantages and challenges of ageing in place for the older adults in Haren?*
2. *What are the perceived barriers and benefits of intergenerational living by the older adults in Haren?*

Reading Guide

The paper is organized as follows. First, the theoretical framework is presented, outlining the relevant concepts and theories on intergenerational living and ageing in place. This establishes the backdrop for the article and defines the foundation of the conceptual model. Based on existing academic literature, the expectations of this study are formulated to outline the anticipated outcomes of the research questions. Following this, the methodology section describes the research methods employed and ethical considerations. The subsequent section presents the findings of the research obtained through the data collection and analysis. The forthcoming discussion leads to the conclusion in section five. Finally, the paper reflects on the research's strengths and weaknesses and provides recommendations for further research.

Theoretical framework

Intergenerational living

Intergenerational living can be viewed as a type of co-housing and defined as a group of people of different generations living together. According to Van Oppen (2023), “Intergenerational living is for people who find satisfaction in helping a neighbour with small tasks or simply having a chat, all without compromising the benefits of their living environment” (Van Oppen, 2023, p.42). This concept is inspired by the German model of *Mehrgenerationenwohnen*, where multiple generations live together, assist each other, and engage in intergenerational interactions, from which multigenerational houses have emerged (Droste, 2015). These housing projects, often located in urban areas, typically include shared common areas for residents.

The term ‘intergenerational’ refers to the coexistence of different generations within the same living arrangement. The size of such co-housing can vary widely, from single house accommodations to larger living concepts, and may include multiple generations from a single family or several families (Beck, 2019). This research focuses on intergenerational living that involves generations from different families cohabiting, either within larger living concepts or in individual houses.

As the concept of ageing in place gains importance, the relevance of intergenerational contact has increased (Lecovich, 2014). Over the past five decades, friends and neighbours have replaced the dominant family ties in social networks. These informal local social contacts now play a more prominent role in the well-being and social capital of older adults (Lager et al., 2015). According to Lager et al. (2015), older adults with wider community-focused networks are less likely to experience loneliness compared to those with more restricted, private networks, underscoring the importance of neighborly contact for the well-being of older adults.

Further research by Lager et al. (2015) indicates that there are insufficient opportunities for older and younger people to meet, which diminishes intergenerational solidarity. Older adults often feel that younger neighbours do not answer their attempts to connect. Despite this, it is crucial for older adults to develop social connections with younger generations to ensure continuous social support. Considering the significance of younger people in the social connections of older adults, Lager et al. (2015) advocate for reevaluating the role of intergenerational places and activities, highlighting the relevance of intergenerational homes.

Examples from France and , which face similar demographic shifts as the Netherlands, demonstrate how intergenerational housing can address these challenges. In France, seniors are encouraged to share their large homes with young students or workers who struggle with housing costs, with the youth helping seniors with daily tasks in return. In Germany, intergenerational housing focuses on seniors and families, allowing young parents to balance work and family while providing social engagement for older adults. Governments in both countries view intergenerational housing as a solution to various societal concerns (Labit & Dubost, 2016).

Ageing in place

Ageing in place is defined by Schorr & Khalaila (2018) as continuing to live within the same house and community, maintaining some level of independence, rather than moving to a nursing home. Care can be provided by family members or caregivers, but moving away from the community is unnecessary. In comparison, the World Health Organization Centre for Health Development defines ageing in place as: "Meeting the desire and ability of people, through the provision of appropriate services and assistance, to remain living relatively independently in the community in his or her current home or an appropriate level of housing. Ageing in place is designed to prevent or delay more traumatic moves to a dependent facility, such as a nursing home" (Vanleerberghe et al., 2017, p.2900). The difference between ageing in place and being 'stuck in place' lies in the choice and the need for independence (Schorr & Khalaila, 2018).

The relevance of the concept of ageing in place is underscored by evidence indicating that physical disabilities tend to appear at older ages than before. In addition, most people aged 65 and over are healthier and more functionally independent compared to previous generations, suggesting that future older adults will live independently for longer periods (Lecovich, 2014).

Ageing in place has emerged as a principal approach to addressing and fulfilling the wishes of older adults (Seo et al., 2023). It offers several benefits, including a strong sense of attachment, familiarity, and identity with one's home and neighbourhood. In contrast, relocating to a nursing home is linked to a decrease in quality of life (Schorr & Khalaila, 2018). Further research shows that older adults prefer staying at home, as it is associated with independence and active living, which enhance control over their lives and improves their quality of life. Living at home fosters autonomy, healthy ageing, and social participation (Wiles et al., 2012). In addition, with an ageing population in the Netherlands ageing in place is often considered as a cost-effective solution compared to residential care in nursing homes (Vanleerberghe et al., 2017).

However, ageing in place also has its disadvantages. Older adults and those residing in neighbourhoods with lower living standards may experience heightened loneliness and social isolation. There is a higher likelihood of experiencing these disadvantages among older adults and individuals with smaller social networks (Groot, 2013). Furthermore, one's home can feel like a prison because of the burden of managing a home. These side effects can decrease the quality of life of older adults. Ageing in place should not go hand in hand with loneliness and frustrations but should provide a life of quality (Vanleerberghe et al., 2017). This ties in with the conclusion of Means (2007), who states that ageing in place does not immediately result in ageing well.

To age in place successfully, adequate housing is required. A strong attachment to one's home can be beneficial, as can an age-friendly design within the home (Dieker, et al., 2018). Research on ageing in place frequently addresses how to make homes more functional and safer for older adults by incorporating various aids to assist with daily activities. Residences are modified that when older individuals become frail or develop chronic illnesses, they can continue living safely at home with the right support and services (Lecovich, 2014).

Conceptual model

The conceptual model below (fig 1) offers a visual framework that clarifies the relations between the theories and concepts related to the perceptions of older adults. The perceptions of the independent variables will be researched through interviews conducted with the target population. The independent variables are divided into three main variables with sub variables. The target population is defined by the control variables.

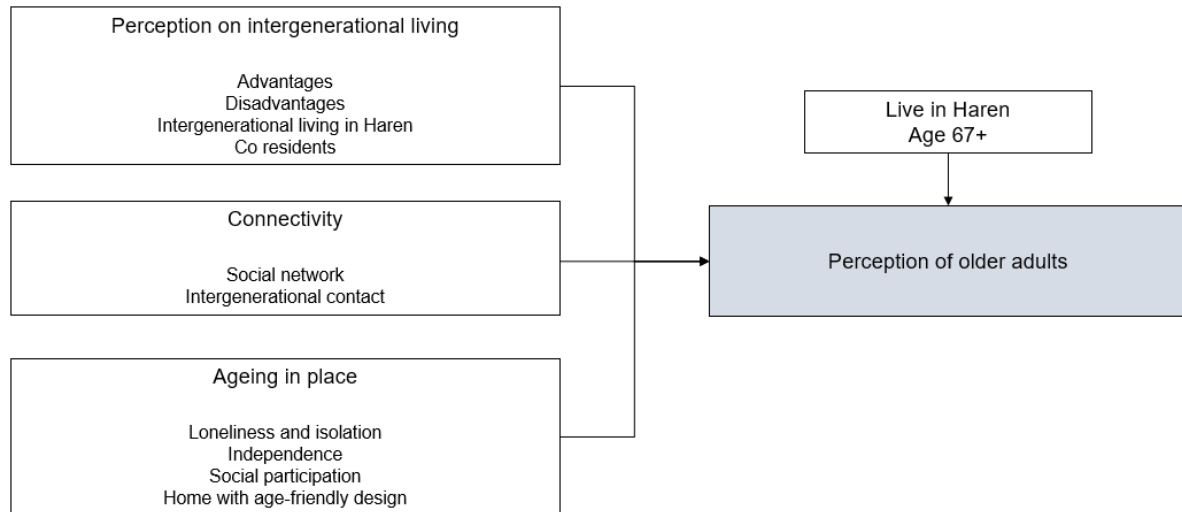


Figure 1: The conceptual model

Expectations

Based on the theoretical framework, the research expects to gain insight into older adults' perspectives regarding the potential of intergenerational living in Haren. It is expected that older adults are likely to prefer ageing in place due to the autonomy it affords them and the emotional attachment to their homes (Wiles et al., 2012). Additionally, the research expects older adults to recognize or experience the disadvantages of ageing in place, such as feelings of loneliness and isolation (Groot, 2013).

When introducing intergenerational living, it is unlikely that all participants are familiar with the concept, the researcher anticipates a need to introduce and explain this concept during the study. Furthermore, it is expected that older adults will recognize intergenerational living as a potential solution for the disadvantages of ageing in place. However, it is also expected that while older adults may sympathize with the concept, they may find it hard to leave their own homes to reside in an intergenerational setting (Abramsson & Andersson, 2015). Overall, the research expects that older adults perceive potential for intergenerational housing in Haren, however they may hesitate to make the move due to concerns privacy and leaving behind their familiar homes.

Methodology

In this chapter, the research methods of this study will be explained and discussed. This research adopts a qualitative research design, aiming to gain an in-depth comprehension of the nuances of ageing in place in Haren. Specifically delving into the perception of older adults regarding the potential of intergenerational housing in Haren. The conversational nature of a qualitative interview allows the researcher to collect a diversity of motivations, opinions, experiences, and meanings. This provides a deeper insight into the candid experiences of the participants, thereby providing data that holds validity. However, it is important to acknowledge that the data lacks standardization, and the results are non-quantifiable and non-reproducible. Consequently, they may be perceived as less reliable (Halperin & Heath, 2020). Despite this limitation, the qualitative approach allows deeper insight into emerging trends and topics within the academic literature, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field (Clifford et al., 2016).

Data collection instrument

The data collection process will involve conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ten older adults, one initiative taker, and four residents of intergenerational housing (Table 1). The interviews are expected to last between 30 minutes to one hour. The semi-structured format of the interviews allows the researcher to collect a diverse range of perspectives.

Prior to data collection, three interview guides were developed, each tailored to specific categories of respondents. Each guide is structured into introductory, key, and closing sections. Introductory questions familiarize participants with the research, gather demographic information, and help them feel comfortable. Key questions focus on ageing in place, addressing the first sub-question of the research, followed by discussions on intergenerational living, addressing the second sub-question and the main research question. Finally, closing questions conclude the conversation and allow for final remarks (Clifford et al., 2016). The first guide (Appendix 1) was made for the ten respondents of the target population, forming the research foundation. The second and third guides (Appendices 2 & 3) follow the same structure and were made for the initiative taker and the three residents of intergenerational housing. These interviews were held to provide a broader perspective on the topic at hand.

Participant recruitment

The criteria for participant selection were carefully established. Participants need to be 67 years or older and currently age in place in Haren. The age limit of 67 years was chosen as this is the current retirement age in the Netherlands (CBS, 2024). The research method was deemed suitable for the target population, as retired older adults typically have enough time to participate in interviews lasting 45 minutes to one hour. Furthermore, the participants were required to live in Haren to ensure their perspectives were relevant to the ageing dynamics within the municipality. The recruitment strategy involved leveraging warm contacts within the target population to access cold contacts, thereby creating a snowball sampling effect to gather more participants. The goal was to conduct a total of 20 interviews, with each interview taking place at the participants' homes.

In addition to the target population, it was deemed interesting to gather diverse perspectives on intergenerational living in Haren. To achieve this, two additional interviews were conducted. One involved residents of an intergenerational home in Haren, while the other featured a participant who initiated intergenerational housing projects in Groningen. Although not directly essential to addressing the research question, these interviews aimed to provide the researcher with additional insight into the topic.

Analysis scheme

To analyze the collected data, the transcribed interviews will be coded using the software, Atlas.ti. A deductive approach will be employed, where predefined codes from the code book (Appendix 5) will be used. These codes form a coding tree and are based on existing literature and organized into three main code groups, with each its own sub-codes (Appendix 5.2). Following the coding process, the data will be analyzed to identify patterns and themes while retaining nuance, allowing for the incorporation of inductive codes that emerge organically from the data itself. The crucial interpretation step involves examining the nuances among the different main codes and their influence on the perception of intergenerational living.

Ethical considerations

In conducting research, it is required to reflect on ethical considerations. Prior to the interview, the participant will be fully informed about the research through a consent form provided in both English and Dutch (Appendix 4). This form outlines the purpose and nature of the study, ensuring transparency and informed consent. Additionally, participants will be reminded of their rights, including the ability to request a pause or opting out the interview at any time. Participants are assured that their participation is completely voluntary and informed that the interview will be recorded. The recordings of the interviews will be stored safely, with only the researcher having access for transcription purposes. To ensure confidentiality, participant's personal information will be strictly protected, and transcripts will be anonymized to ensure privacy. The names stated in table one are pseudonyms and cannot be linked to the participants. Furthermore, all data will be deleted upon completion of the thesis, adhering to data protection regulations. Throughout the research process, the GDPR guidelines will be leading.

Positionality

Moreover, it is crucial to consider the researcher's positionality in the study. Given the significant differences in life phases between the researcher and the participants, potential negative biases may arise. Additionally, participants may have different political views and may have negative opinions and misconceptions about ageing in place or the research purpose. The researcher needs to be aware to maintain a calm and open attitude throughout the interview process. This awareness helps ensure unbiased and respectful interactions with participants, promoting the collection of accurate and meaningful data.

The data

During the data collection phase, a total of ten interviews were conducted. Among these, two interviews involved multiple participants being interviewed simultaneously. Specially, ten respondents represented the target population, while an additional four respondents were to gather additional perspectives on the topic. In total, fourteen respondents contributed to this research. The interviews took place between April 18th and May 8th. Following these interviews, no further data collection was conducted, as saturation had been reached, indicating that sufficient breadth of information and perceptions had been attained from the participants.

Interview	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Marital status	(Former) occupation	Years living in Haren
Older Adult	Maria	82	Woman	Widow	Executive secretary	52
Older Adult	Johannes	81	Man	Married	Detective	21
Older Adult	Jan	70	Man	Widower	IT for University	32
Older Adult	Elisabeth	85	Woman	Widow	Math teacher	47
Older Adult	Anna	87	Woman	Married	Biology assistant	51
Older Adult	Cornelis	87	Man	Married	Biology professor	51
Older Adult	Adriana	73	Woman	Widow	No profession	27
Older Adult	Catharina	77	Woman	Married	Nurse	4
Older Adult	Piet	78	Man	Married	Teacher	4
Older Adult	Helena	74	Woman	Single	Nurse	39
Residents	Sophia	54	Woman	Single	Nurse	11
Residents	Aafje	66	Woman	Widow	Nurse	11
Residents	Emma	X	Woman	Married	Nurse	10
Initiative Taker	Oscar	54	Man	Married	Public health sector	15

Table 1: An overview of the characteristics of the participants

Results

Ageing in Place

This section will emphasize the interviewees' experiences with ageing in place and will discuss the findings concerning the advantages, and the disadvantages associated with this concept. The findings discussed here answer sub-question one: *“What are the advantages and challenges of ageing in place for the older adults in Haren?”* They support the accompanying expectation that while older adults generally prefer to age in place to foster autonomy and have an emotional connection to their homes, they also acknowledge the risks of loneliness and isolation. Overall, these findings illuminate the nuanced perspectives of older adults on ageing in place, highlighting both the benefits and challenges they face.

Analysis of the data shows that several interviewees indicated that they specifically sought homes in their community that would be suitable for ageing in place. This is in line with the paper of Dieker et al. (2018), who stated that to age in place, adequate housing is required. Respondent Elisabeth mentioned, *“No, I decided that I wanted to live on the same floor.”*

Because I was afraid that climbing stairs would be a bit difficult. So that's why I ended up here." Similarly, Catharina commented, *"We came to live here specifically for an easy house. We bought a life-long house here."* Especially having no stairs in one's home is mentioned as an sought out age-friendly design.

In addition, this paper states that older adults with a strong attachment to their homes are more inclined to age in place, as suggested by Dieker et al. (2018). Several interviewees expressed contentment with their home environment and hold on to the memories the home holds. Johannes remarked, *"You are used to your home, and your habits, and your wife, and I don't mind growing older this way."*

Wiles et al. (2012) associate ageing at home with independence, which enhances the quality of life of older adults by allowing them to retain control over their lives. In line with this paper the majority of interviewees commented that staying independent is of the essence when about the biggest advantage of ageing in place,. Even if it involves receiving or hiring support, which goes hand in hand with the research of Dieker et al (2018). Talking about this issue Maria said, *"I hope I can stay here even if things get tough and I become dependent on home care. Because I want to continue living here centrally"*.

However, some respondents highlighted the difficulties in managing home maintenance, just as Vanleerberghe et al. (2017) stated, arguing that quality of life may decline if household chores become too burdensome. A few interviewees stated that in order to age in place it is important to accept that the house is not perfect maintained anymore. Additionally, concerns about the need to stay healthy to age in place were raised, indicating that health could be a control variable for ageing in place.

Schorr & Khalaila (2018) suggest that moving to a nursing home decreases the quality of life, a view echoed by some of the responses on ageing in place. Some interviewees expressed negative comments about nursing homes being expensive and having limited social interactions. Adriana's comment underscores the desire for independence, *"First of all, it's about my health. I guess I'm a bit stubborn too. But above all I want to maintain my own dignity, if I am completely dependent you don't have to put me in a nursing home."*

Loneliness and isolation

Further analysis reveals that most respondents recognized loneliness among other older adults. Seven out of ten reported knowing someone in their neighbourhood who was lonely or isolated. In the end none of the respondents admitted to experience loneliness themselves.. As Maria commented, *"I see that a lot of older adults are very lonely"*. Which ties in with Means (2007), stating that ageing in place does not always result in ageing well.

According to Groot (2013), older adults who age in place with smaller social networks are more likely to experience loneliness and isolation. Catharina supported Groot's notion, commenting on her experience with loneliness, *"No, and neither were my acquaintances who came to live alone. They were exactly that because they were all active in certain circles. And that is something I would like to recommend to all elderly people."* This response underscores the importance of maintaining multiple social networks.

In contrast, one respondent downplayed the issue of loneliness, suggesting it was not a significant problem. A surprising result was that a pair of respondents highlighted a different perspective, arguing that the younger generation appears lonelier due to excessive phone use. Adriana critically observed, *“You have a relationship with your device, but it is different from your circle of acquaintances.”* This interesting result shifts the focus to the broader implications of social connectivity across generations.

Connectivity

In the interview, respondents were asked to describe their social networks. The majority indicated that they were very busy, though there were differences found in the composition of these networks. Interestingly, respondents with larger social networks were mostly women. Conversely, men tended to have smaller social networks, as Jan commented: *“My social network here in Haren is mini.”* Whilst a minority mentioned that they appreciated they could still maintain some distance from their neighbours, all agreed on the value of neighbourhood bonds. Anna stated, *“The story is, we can all just walk in together.”* and Piet remarked, *“How we live, we can get along with everyone, and if at some point we have “tramalant”, then we can just leave.”*

When asked about the cohesion between different generations, the interviewees unanimously perceived a lack of intergenerational cohesion in Haren. As Helena put it, *“If you are not careful you will only be in the grey group. But hey, we have that everywhere at the moment. From church to sports, to community centers. The others still have to work. I wouldn't know how to reach those young people.”* These perceptions align with the research of Lager et al. (2015), which suggests that insufficient opportunities for interactions between older and younger reduce intergenerational solidarity.

Intergenerational living

Turning now to the concept of intergenerational living. The interviews revealed varied levels of familiarity with the concept. Some interviewees had prior knowledge, while others needed an explanation. Responses to questions about intergenerational living showed differing perceptions among the respondents.

When asked about the advantages of intergenerational living, most respondents expressed positive views about this form of co-housing. Several interviewees felt that it would enhance social connectivity. Anna remarked, *“There is an understanding between old people and smaller children. That fifteen-year-old children can go shopping or something. But then as a “lolletje”. Well, what's more fun than living together.”* Another interviewee echoed this sentiment, noting that proximity could help in the mutual understanding of the problems of others. These views align with Lecovich (2014), who emphasizes the importance of intergenerational contact as people age. Maria recognizes that intergenerational living increases intergenerational contact and states, *“I don't have a lot of contact with the younger generation. Personally i would like to live with all sorts of people.”*

Additionally, some respondents suggested intergenerational living could decrease the disadvantages of ageing in place. Catharina interestingly noted, *“Yes. And the older people often have a lot to say, don't they? They have had a very interesting life. Well, you can learn something from that.”* This implies that intergenerational living can enhance older adults' sense of contribution to society. Adrianna added to this by stating that if starts to feel as if it does not matter if you exist or not, you start feel like a burden. Something little as reading a book to children would make her feel useful. As she stated, *“Yes, then I think you also have fewer disadvantages.”*

While talking about the benefits of intergenerational living, concerns were raised about the disadvantages, particularly noise disturbance. Additionally, a common concern was the diversity of people in intergenerational living, with the majority of participants expressing a preference for like-minded people. Elisabeth commented, *“But it can also be difficult because there can also be some very difficult people among them.”* And Jan described it as *“And not, let's say, a fanatic FC Groningen supporter. Next to like someone from the hockey club or the tennis court.”* Further concerns included the potential loss of freedom, the adaptability of older adults, and status sensitivity within the community. The findings discussed in this section answer sub-question two.

The data suggest that older adults in Haren generally support the idea of intergenerational living. However, a conflicting discourse emerged as some respondents felt that communal living was something they had to readjust to. Helena articulated, *“It's always difficult, living together. Could I do that again or something? You know. You shouldn't think about that yet. On the side you are alone, you don't want to. But living together. Well. In between there.”* Catharina and Piet recognized the advantages intergenerational living but found that ageing in place can be very comfortable, stating, *“What you say, young people, old people mixed together. That would be very nice too. But now in our situation that is not necessary. This is how we feel free. If we need help, home care is there.”*

Concluding that while intergenerational living is viewed positively and seen as beneficial for fostering social connections and mutual support, it also has downsides, as it can bring tensions, can cost effort, or make one feel less free. These potential downside would make respondents hesitant to move to intergenerational living.

Discussing the willingness of participants to consider intergenerational living in their own homes, the majority of interviewees were particularly critical. Many felt that their houses were unsuitable for such an arrangement. This view was echoed as the primary obstacle. Furthermore, several interviewees expressed their desire for privacy thereby rejecting the idea of intergenerational living within their own homes. As Cornelis put it, *“Well, because it is of course about a tremendous restriction of your freedom in your home. And I personally have a lot of trouble with that.”* Jan, however, only saw potential in his former, more spacious house, commenting, *“Yes. Because those rooms there in that house, we had so much space there. That you don't have to meet each other either.”*

When discussing what kind of people the respondents would want to live with, the desire for like-minded people was a recurring theme. As Maria mentioned, *“I think that is a condition in a generational home, that the young people who live there are probably people with a certain*

mentality, otherwise you wouldn't live there." Responses varied when it came to living with different generations. Some respondents were open to living with all generations, while others had some negative comments about living with children. The idea of living with students was also discussed; some respondents admired how some students live with older adults, while others were concerned about the irregular schedules of students. Jan highlighted this distinction, arguing that the difference lay in the ability to address his fellow residents, *"Yes, but the difference with students is that I think I can handle them more easily because you can talk to them. If they make noise after eleven, you can tell them to go to the pub or their club. You can have a conversation with them. But with children aged 4, 5, 6 up to 10, I can't tell them not to be kids anymore."*

Regarding the experiences of those currently living in intergenerational homes, all interviewees expressed satisfaction with their living arrangements. The benefits they mentioned can be summarized as "The connection with others". Emma highlighted that her children were raised by the entire community, enhancing their learning experiences. Additionally, older residents were seen as active contributors rather than merely elderly. However, the interviewees acknowledged that it was not always perfect, but small arguments were always solved. When considering the potential of intergenerational housing in Haren, the interviewees saw potential but noted that awareness and understanding of the concept were crucial. Emma commented, *"Because I also think that all those people cannot think and see beyond the limitations they have. So something that is beyond your limitations, yes you don't know about it. So they do need to know about it."*

Turning to the main research question, the majority of interviewees saw the potential for intergenerational living in Haren, thus supporting the study's expectations. One participant mentioned that it would succeed in Haren as there are a lot of like-minded people. Jan stated, *"Yes, I think so. Perhaps especially in Haren, you must have people there who are somewhat like-minded. You shouldn't do too many strange things with different generations, and it becomes a kind of Haren in miniature, so to speak."*

However, some concerns were outed on realizing intergenerational living in Haren. Some interviewees questioned if the experiences of their generation would affect the openness to intergenerational living. Maria observed, *"Our generation has experienced the war and we experienced tremendous prosperity after the war. And many of those women have good retirement homes. And lived in a big house. I don't know if they would still enjoy living with others."* Other respondents took into account the demographics of Haren. Given that Haren is a municipality characterized by relative affluence, some respondents discussed the willingness of older adults in Haren to depart from their larger residences. One of the residents of intergenerational living, Sophia, mentioned the perspective that, *"The older adults that live in those Villa's, I don't think you can persuade them so easily anymore. But the generational below them."* Adriana expressed a direct sentiment, stating, *"I also wonder if many people from Haren would do that, and I'm biased, without any basis. I see a lot of people who prefer to think only about themselves. And then, I call it very negatively, the 'snobs of Haren.'"*

Adrianna also mentioned that it would be easier to move to intergenerational living if it is commonly known that these forms exist. Stating that, *"And if you know that these forms of*

living exist, I think you will adapt to them more easily. And that also brings peace of mind. I mean, it's just like when you were 65, you automatically moved to a retirement home."

Overall, the results suggest that there is potential for intergenerational living in Haren. Whilst a minority mentioned that they would rather live independently, all agreed it would be a beneficial initiative, especially for alleviating loneliness among older adults.

Conclusion

This research aims to explore the perceptions of older adults who age in place regarding the potential of intergenerational living in Haren. The central research question addressed is: *"How do older adults who age in place perceive the potential of intergenerational living in Haren?"* The findings of the research reveal that respondents do recognize the potential of intergenerational living. The analysis of the data shows that several factors contribute to this perspective.

Firstly, the experiences with ageing in place significantly influence perceptions. Most respondents express happiness with ageing in place, having a strong emotional attachment to their homes. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that ageing in place has resulted in a sense of independency, an important benefit for the respondents. The findings support existing literature on the benefits of ageing in place (Dieker et al, (2018); Wiles et al, (2021); Schorr & Khalaila, (2018)).

However, the study also identifies challenges associated with ageing in place, such as the energy demands of home maintenance and the majority of respondents are concerned if they will stay healthy enough to age in place. These results are in line with the literature of Vanleerberghe et al. (2017). Interestingly, the respondents did not mention loneliness and isolation as disadvantages, but further inquiry suggests that it is present among older adults in Haren. With this information the first sub question is addressed: *"What are the advantages and challenges of ageing in place for the older adults in Haren?"*

The findings on the cohesion between different generations suggest that older adults lack intergenerational contact. Supporting the importance of intergenerational living as noted by Lecovich (2014).

The second sub question, *"What are the perceived barriers and benefits of intergenerational living by the older adults in Haren?"* identified that most respondents expressed enthusiasm for intergenerational living, highlighting benefits such as increased connectivity and reduced disadvantages of ageing in place, such as loneliness and isolation. Other benefits that were mentioned are that problems would be solved easier and the increase in older adults' sense of contribution to society.

Nonetheless, some respondents did not recognize the societal benefits and valued their privacy. Other perceived disadvantages were identified as noise disturbance and the diversity of residents. Other insights reveal that older adults may need to adjust to shared living arrangements. Many respondents found intergenerational living within their current

homes not an option due to the lack of space and a desire for privacy. Preferences for intergenerational living indicate a clear interest in residing with like-minded people.

In conclusion, this study answers the central research question: *“How do older adults who age in place perceive the potential of intergenerational living in Haren?”* by demonstrating a recognized potential for intergenerational living in Haren, recognizing the importance of compatibility of co-residents. Despite the study’s limitations, the insights on the perspectives of older adults on the topic of intergenerational living are of great relevance in the debate on housing options for older adults.

Reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of this study, it is essential to acknowledge its limited scope. Because the sample size is small and of a qualitative nature, the introduced patterns would need to be firmed up with quantitative research. Nevertheless, despite the limited sample, data saturation was achieved, as similar perspectives were repeated during the data-collecting phase. One limitation is that three out of ten interviews were conducted with multiple respondents, which may have led to less candid responses due to the presence of others. Another significant limitation is the potential misunderstanding of the concept of intergenerational living by respondents, potentially affecting the generalizability of their statements. This limitation was anticipated, and the researcher provided explanations of the concepts to each respondent to mitigate this concern.

If the debate on intergenerational living is to be moved forward, future research should expand the sample size and a larger participant pool. Quantitative research could quantify interest in intergenerational living and determine underlying motives. Despite its limitations, this study offers valuable insights for municipalities and civil initiatives seeking to promote intergenerational living.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide for target population older adults in Haren

Introduction questions

Can you please tell me a bit about yourself?

- Age, former occupation, family?

For how many years have you lived in Haren?

Introduction to intergenerational living

Do you know what intergenerational living is?

- Have you had any previous experience or thoughts about intergenerational living?
- Have you ever talked about it? With friends or family?

Key questions

What does your social network look like in Haren?

- Do you have good contact with friends, neighbours, and family?

Are you familiar with the concept of “ageing in place” (Ouder worden in eigen omgeving)?

- What does it mean to you?
- Could you share any personal experiences or anecdotes related to ageing in place in Haren?
- What are the benefits of ageing in place?
- What are the disadvantages of ageing in place?

Do you know any other older adults who live in Haren?

- How do they envision their living arrangement in the future?
- Do you see loneliness and isolation among others?

How do you envision intergenerational living in Haren?

- What potential benefits do you see?
- With what kind of people would you want to live?
- How would you feel about moving?
- Would you be open to intergenerational living in your own house?
- What concerns or reservations do you have about intergenerational living?

Closing questions

Are there things you want to mention or talk about that we haven't discussed yet?

Do you have final remarks or suggestions for future research?

Do you know other people who would want to participate in an interview?

Appendix 1.2 Dutch interview guide for target population older adults in Haren

Introductievragen

Kunt u wat over uzelf vertellen?

- Leeftijd, voormalige beroepen, familie?

Hoelang woont u al in Haren?

Introductie tot meergeneratiewoningen

Weet u al wat de woonvorm meergeneratiewonen is? Anders leg ik dat voor het interview uit.

- Heeft u wel eens nagedacht om in een andere woonvorm te leven?
- Heeft u al een keer te maken gehad of gedacht aan meergeneratiewonen?
- Heeft u er al wel eens een gesprek over gevoerd?

Hoofdvragen

Hoe ziet u sociale kring eruit in Haren?

- Heeft u goed contact met vrienden, familie, buren?
- Voelt het alsof er verbinding is tussen verschillende leeftijdsgroepen in Haren?

Bent u bekend met het fenomeen "Ouder worden in eigen omgeving"?

- Wat betekent het voor u?
- Kunt u enige persoonlijke ervaringen of anekdotes delen over het ouder worden in Haren?
- Wat zijn de voordelen van ouder worden in eigen omgeving?
- Wat zijn de nadelen van ouder worden in eigen omgeving?

Kent u meerdere mensen die 67+ zijn en in Haren wonen?

- Heeft u het wel eens over hoe zij hun toekomst voor zich zien?
- Is u wel eens eenzaamheid of isolatie opgevallen bij anderen?

Hoe ziet u meergeneratiewonen voor u in Haren?

- Wat voor voordelen ziet u?
- Met wat voor mensen zou u samen willen wonen?
- Hoe zou u het vinden om te verhuizen?
- Zou u open staan om meergeneratiewonen in uw eigen huis?
- Wat voor bedenkingen of zorgen heeft u over meergeneratiewoningen?

Afsluitende vragen

Is er nog iets wat u wil bespreken wat nog niet aan bod is gekomen gedurende dit interview?

Heeft u nog opmerkingen over het interview, of voor toekomstige interviews?

Kent u nog andere mensen die mee zouden willen doen aan dit onderzoek?

Appendix 2. Dutch interview guide for residents intergenerational home

Introductievragen

Kunt u me iets over uzelf vertellen?

- Leeftijd, baan, woonplaats?

Introductie met meergeneratiewoningen

Hoe bent u in aanmerking gekomen met meergeneratiewoningen?

- Heeft u meerdere projecten met dit concept gedaan?

Hoofdvragen

Kunt u me iets meer vertellen over het ontstaan over het initiatief van dit meergeneratiehuis?

- Hoe zag de meergeneratie inloop eruit?

Hoe bleek dat het duidelijk was dat er onder inwoners een behoefte was aan dit soort projecten?

- Kwamen er veel mensen op af?

Wat waren de positieve maatschappelijke effecten die jullie waarnamen?

- Vermindering eenzaamheid onder ouderen?
- Is er veel eenzaamheid in Haren?
- Sociale cohesie?

Waarom was het lastig om dit soort initiatieven tot wasdom te laten komen?

- Wat zijn de voor en nadelen?

Wat is er nodig om het wel te realiseren?

- Vanuit welke bevolkingslaag?
- Wat is de grootste drempel?
- Waarom lukt het andere landen wel?

Veel ouderen staan ervoor open, maar wel met gelijkgestemden, was dat ook in jullie concept zo?

- Hoe zorgden jullie daarvoor?

Is er potentie voor een meergeneratiehuis in Haren?

Afsluitende vragen

Is er nog iets wat u wil bespreken wat nog niet aan bod is gekomen gedurende dit interview?

Heeft u nog opmerkingen over het interview, of voor toekomstige interviews?

Kent u nog andere mensen die mee zouden willen doen aan dit onderzoek?

Appendix 3. Dutch interview guide for initiative taker intergenerational homes Groningen

Introductievragen

Kunt u me iets over uzelf vertellen?

- Leeftijd, baan, woonplaats?

Introductie met meergeneratiewoningen

Hoe bent u in aanmerking gekomen met meergeneratiewoningen?

- Heeft u meerdere projecten met dit concept gedaan?

Hoofdvragen

Kunt u me iets meer vertellen over het ontstaan van het initiatief meergeneratiewoningen in Haren?

Waaruit bleek dat er een behoefte was aan dit soort projecten?

- Hoeveel interactie is er op de website?

Wat waren de positieve maatschappelijke effecten die jullie waarnamen?

- Vermindering eenzaamheid onder ouderen?
- Is er veel eenzaamheid in Haren?
- Sociale cohesie?

Waarom was het lastig om dit soort initiatieven tot wasdom te laten komen?

- Voor en nadelen?

Wat is er nodig om het wel te realiseren?

- Vanuit welke bevolkingslaag?
- Wat is de grootste drempel?
- Waarom lukt het andere landen wel?

Veel ouderen staan ervoor open, maar wel met gelijkgestemden, was dat ook in jullie concept zo?

- Hoe zorgden jullie daarvoor?

Is er potentie voor een meergeneratiewoning in Haren?

Afsluitende vragen

Is er nog iets wat u wil bespreken wat nog niet aan bod is gekomen gedurende dit interview?

Heeft u nog opmerkingen over het interview, of voor toekomstige interviews?

Kent u nog andere mensen die mee zouden willen doen aan dit onderzoek?

Appendix 4: Consent form

Title of study: Intergenerational living
Researcher: Jara Zorzi

Thank you for considering participation in this research study! Before we proceed with the interview, it is important that you understand the purpose of this study and your rights as a participant. Please take your time to read this consent form carefully and feel free to ask any questions before agreeing to participate.

This study aims to explore the perception and experiences of older adults regarding intergenerational living in the community of Haren. In this interview, I will ask about your experiences, opinions, and thoughts regarding ageing in place and intergenerational living in Haren.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to engage in a semi-structured interview lasting around 45 to 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

To keep our participants private, all information collected during the interview will be kept confidential and will only be accessible to the researcher. Your identity will be protected and your name will be replaced by a synonym. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without providing a reason.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you acknowledge that you understood the information provided in the consent form and agree to participate voluntarily and consent to the recording of the interview for research purposes. You understand that your participation will be kept private and your identity will be protected.

- My participation is voluntary: Yes / No
- I am aware the interview is being recorded: Yes / No
- I permit that the interview can be used for research purposes: Yes / No
- I am aware of the topic of this research: Yes / No

If you have additional questions, concerns or wish to withdraw from the study, please feel free to say so. If not, I will ask you to write down the date, your name, and your signature.

Date: - -

Participant's name:

.....

Researcher's name:

Jara Zorzi

Participant's Signature:

Researcher's Signature:

Contact details

Jara Zorzi

j.e.zorzi@student.rug.nl

Bachelor student in Human Geography and Planning, Faculty of Spatial Sciences
University of Groningen

Appendix 4.2: Consent form in Dutch

Het onderzoek: Meergeneratiewonen
Onderzoeker: Jara Zorzi

Bedankt dat u overweegt mee te doen aan dit onderzoek! Voordat we beginnen met het interview is het belangrijk dat u het doel van het onderzoek en uw rechten als deelnemer begrijpt. Neem de tijd om dit toestemmingsformulier door te lezen, en stel gerust vragen.

Dit interview probeert de potentie van meergeneratiewoningen in Haren te onderzoeken aan de hand van de ervaringen en meningen van ouderen in Haren. In het interview wordt er gevraagd naar uw mening, ervaringen en ideeën over het ouder worden in eigen huis en over meergeneratiewoningen in Haren.

Het interview duurt ongeveer 45 tot 60 minuten en zal worden opgenomen om later verwerkt te kunnen worden. Om de uw gegevens privé te houden zal uw identiteit niet bekend worden gemaakt en uw naam niet genoemd worden. Uw deelname aan het onderzoek is ook compleet vrijwillig en u kan op elk moment stoppen mocht u dat willen.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| • Mijn deelname is vrijwillig | Ja / Nee |
| • Ik ben er van bewust dat het interview wordt opgenomen | Ja / Nee |
| • Het interview mag voor dit onderzoek gebruikt worden | Ja / Nee |
| • Ik snap waar het onderzoek over gaat | Ja / Nee |

Als je nog vragen hebt, bedenkingen of niet wil deelnemen aan het onderzoek, voel je vrij om het te zeggen. Zo niet, dan vraag ik je om de datum, uw naam, en uw handtekening te zetten.

Datum: - -

Naam deelnemer:

.....

Naam onderzoeker:

Jara Zorzi

Handtekening deelnemer:

Handtekening onderzoeker:

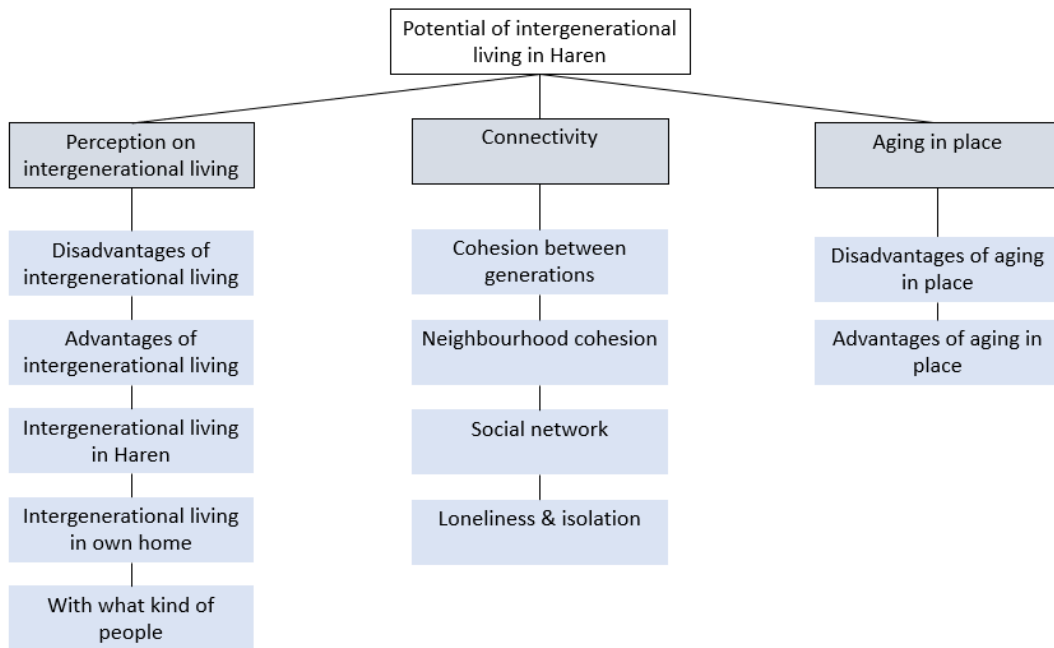
Contact informatie

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Appendix 5: Deductive code tree



Appendix 5.2: Coding tree

